

Message Text

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SUBJECT: CONTROVERSY OVER BLACK MANAGERS IN WHITE AREAS

REF: JOHANNESBURG 1887, JOHANNESBURG 1851

1. SUMMARY: REACTING TO DEBATE OVER HIS RECENT REASSERTION OF THE BAN ON EMPLOYING BLACKS AS STORE MANAGERS IN WHITE AREAS (JOHANNESBURG 1851), MINISTER OF BANTU AFFAIRS M C BOTHA HAS AGREED TO LOOK AT GUIDELINES TO BE PREPARED BY THE ASSOCIATED CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE ON THE TRAINING AND APPOINTMENT OF BLACK MANAGERS IN STORES IN WHITE AREAS WHERE THE CUSTOMERS ARE MAINLY BLACK AND ALL EMPLOYEES ARE BLACK. THIS GESTURE APPEARS TO HAVE CHECKED MOMENTARILY SOME OF THE VOCIFEROUS CRITICISM OF NATIONALIST POLICY, BUT NOT ALL BY ANY MEANS. THE LITMUS TEST OF REAL GOVERNMENT INTENTIONSON THIS QUESTION MAY BECOME APPARENT FIRST IN PRETORIA ITSELF WHERE DECISIONS AGAINST COMPANIES EMPLOYING INDIAN MANAGERS ARE CONTINUING TO BE ENFORCED BY THE COURTS. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING A MEETING ON FEBRUARY 26, THE ASSOCIATION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE (ASSOCOML) AND MINISTER OF BANTU ADMINISTRATION M.C. BOTHA AGREED:

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TION M.C. BOTHA AGREED:

A) THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF BANTU ADMINISTRATION WOULD ISSUE GUIDELINES ON THE TRAINING OF BLACKS FOR HIGHER POSTS IN THE HOMELANDS;

B) THE MINISTER WOULD CONSIDER GUIDELINES REGARDING THE

TRAINING AND USE OF BLACK MANAGERS FOR THE BLACK URBAN TOWNSHIPS;
AND

C) ASSOCOM WOULD PREPARE AT THE REQUEST OF THE MINISTER,
GUIDELINES FOR HIS CONSIDERATION ON THE TRAINING AND APPOINTMENT
OF BLACK MANAGERS IN WHITE URBAN AREAS WHERE THERE WAS A PRE-
PONDERANCE OF BLACK CUSTOMERS AND A TOTALITY OF BLACK EMPLOYEES.

3. IN RESPONSE TO THE ASSOCOM SUGGESTION THAT THOSE ASPECTS OF
THE GRUP AREAS ACT WHICH AFFECT LABOR USAGE BE REFERRED TO
THE WIEHAHN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO LABOR LEGISLATION, THE
MINISTER SAID THIS DID NOT FALL WITHIN HIS PORTFOLIO.

4. IN TERMS OF THE GROUP AREAS ACT IT IS ILLEGAL TO EMPLOY A
PERSON WHO IS NOT WHITE IN A "WHITE AREA" IN ANY OF THE
FOLLOWING POSITIONS:

A) "MANAGER" -- WHO SUPERVISES, DIRECTS AND TAKES OVERALL
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACTIVITIES OF AN ESTABLISHMENT, ITS
DEPARTMENT OR BRANCH.

B) "SUPERVISOR"-- WHO SUPERVISES THE SERVICE OF CUSTOMERS
IN AN ESTABLISHMENT.

C) "EXECUTIVE, PROFESSION), TECHNICAL OR ADMINISTRATIVE
EMPLOYEE" -- WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WORK IN WHICH DECISIONS ARE
REGULARLY TAKEN OF AN EXECUTIVE, PROFESSIONAL, TECHNICAL OR
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ADMINISTRATIVE CHARACTER.

D) "CHARGEHAND" -- WHO SUPERVISES SALES, THE SAFEKEEPING OF
STOCKS AND WHO DOES BUSINESS WITH THE PUBLIC ANYWHERE IN THE
PREMISES OR WITH ANYSPECIFIED TYPE OF PRODUCT IN AN ESTABLISHMENT.
PROVISION IS MADE FOR APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION FROM
THESE REGULATIONS.

5. ASSOCOMS BASIC VIEW IS THAT:

A) THE FUTURE GROWTH OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY DEPENDS
SIGNIFICANTLY UPON THE BETTER AND FULLER USE OF ALL RACES IN
THE LABOR FIELD IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE GROWTH POTENTIAL OF THE
COUNTRY.

B) THE LEGITIMATE ASPIRATIONS OF URBAN BLACKS SHOULD BE
SATISFIED THROUGH APPROPRIATE JOB ENRICHMENT.

C) THERE SHOULD BE GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN THE APPLICATION
OF POLICY REGARDING EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS FOR BLACKS IN URBAN
AREAS.

6. COMMENT: WHILE BOTHA'S RESPNSE TO ASSOCOM RELIEVED
MISGIVINGS OF SOME WHO WERE DISTURBED BY THE RECENT

REASSERTION OF THE BAN ON EMPLOYING BLACKS IN MANAGERIAL POSITIONS IN WHITE AREAS, IT DID NOT SATISFY MANY CRITICAL OBSERVERS OF NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT POLICIES. RAYMOND PARSONS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ASSOCOM, SUGGESTED TO US OFFICIALS THAT BOTHA NEEDED TO GET OFF THE HOOK HE WAS ON WITHOUT LOSING FACE. MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT NIC OLIVIER (FORMER UNITED PARTY -- LEANING TOWARD PROGRESSIVE REFORM PARTY), HOWEVER, SEES BOTHA'S RESPONSE AS AN ATTEMPT TO GET ASSOCOM TO BE ONE PARTY TO THE IMPOSITION OF JOB RESERVATION AND RACE DISCRIMINATION. HELEN SUZMAN, PRP SPOKESMAN ON RACE RELATIONS, IS REPORTED TO HAVE CRITICIZED THE MINISTE FOR IMPOSING "ABSURD" CONDITIONS. "THERE SHOULD BE ABSOLUTDLY NO RESTRICTIONS ON MAKING USE OF THE TALENTS AND ABILITY OF BLACK CITIZENS IN THE URBAN AREAS." LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SHE SAID THESE GROUP AREAS RESTRICTIOS WERE THE CAUSE OF MUCH BITTERNESS AMONG BLACKS AND THAT M C BOTHA "SHOWS COMPELETE INSENSITIVITY FOR BLACKS AND NO FEELING FOR NATURAL JUSTICE."

7. OTHER CRITICS SUCH AS ECONOMIST SHIELA VAN DER HORST HAVE NOTED THAT THE BAN ON BLACK MANAGERS IN SHOPS IN WHITE AREAS CONTRADICTS THE SO-CALLED SULLIVAN MANIFESTO OR CODE OF CONDUCT FOR US BUSINESS IN SOUTH AFRICA TO WHICH TOP NATIONALIST LEADERS HAVE SAID THEY HAD NO OBJECTION. IN SUMMARY, WHILE THERE IS SOME SATISFACTION THAT BOTHA HAS AT LEAST AGREED TO REEXAMINE THE SITUATION, MANY OPPONENTS OF NATIONALIST POLICY, PARTICULARLY PRP SUPPORTERS, CONTINUE TO ASK WHY SUCH NARROW LIMITS BE IMPOSED ON BLACKS REGARDING MANAGERIAL POSTS, I.E., TO HAHAVE THEM ONLY IN STORES WHERE THE CUSTOMERS ARE MAINLY BLACK AND ALL EMPLOYEES ARE BLACK.

8. FYI: THE PROSECUTION OF COMPANIES EMPLOYING INDIANS AS MANAGERS IN THE PRETORIA AREA IS CONTINUING (JOHANNESBURG 1887) DESPITE BOTHA' AGREEMENT TO REVIEW THE ISSUE OF BLACK MANAGERS IN WHITE AREAS. TWO INDIANS AND THE DIRECTOR OF A CLOTHING FIRM CONVICCED OF CONTRAVENING THE GROUP AREAS ACT WERE REPORTEDLY ORDERED BY A PRETORIA MAGISTRATE ON JULY 27 TO VACATE THEIR BUSINESS PREMISES BY SEPTEMBER 30. JOHNSON

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